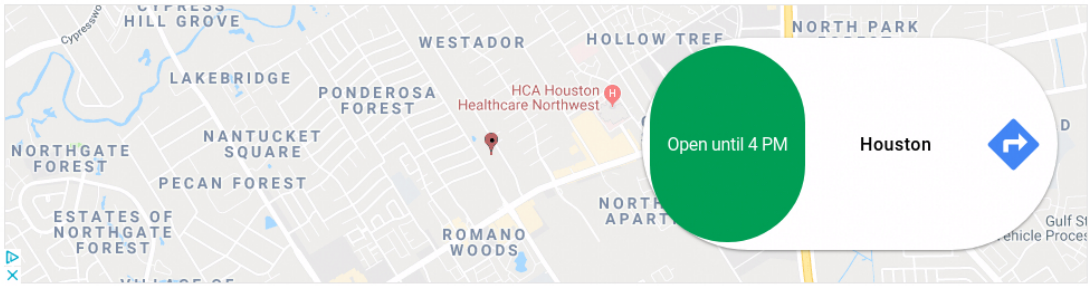




# Global Attack on Gender Studies

Scholars say their field is coming under increasing pressures from forces outside the academy who want to delegitimize it.

By Elizabeth Redden // December 5, 2018

125 COMMENTS

NELSON ALMEIDA / AFP/ GETTY IMAGES

Protest in Brazil against Judith Butler

The decision by the Hungarian government earlier this fall to withdraw accreditation from gender studies programs -- a full-frontal governmental assault on an academic discipline -- sent shock waves through the field.

Gender studies "has no business [being taught] in universities," because it is "an ideology not a science," a deputy to Hungary's prime minister, Zsolt Semjen, told the international news agency Agence France-Presse.

Semjen also said labor market demand for the field was "close to zero."

"No one wants to employ a gender-ologist," Semjen said.

Yet even if the scale of the assault on gender studies in Hungary was shocking, the rhetoric was not. Gender studies scholars say what happened in Hungary is the most extreme manifestation of what seem to be growing attacks on the discipline as right-wing populist parties gain power or influence in many countries around the globe.

The attacks take many different forms, including blacklists and harassment of individual scholars, the proposal of legislative measures to police classroom speech, and attempts to censor academic events. In Brazil the pioneering gender studies scholar Judith Butler was burned in effigy and accosted by protestors at the airport last year after far-right Christian groups objected to her visit to the country for a conference she'd helped to organize. As Butler told *Inside Higher Ed* in an interview at the time, her sense was that the protesters "who engaged this frenzy of effigy burning, stalking and harassment

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want to defend Brazil as a place where LGBTQ people are not welcome, where the family remains heterosexual (so no gay marriage), where abortion is illegal and reproductive freedom does not exist. They want boys to be boys, and girls to be girls, and for there to be no complexity in questions such as these."

David Paternotte, an associate professor in sociology at the Free University of Brussels (ULB) and co-editor of the book *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), said less extreme attacks on gender studies often take the form of press articles criticizing the discipline. "People saying it's ideological, it's not scientific. This is what we hear the most -- that it's a waste of public money, it shouldn't be a part of what is taught at universities."

"Most of the time the critics don't have access to state power, like in Hungary, but it's creating a climate that is becoming more hostile to gender studies in many countries," Paternotte said. "German colleagues are extremely worried because of attacks in the media; there isn't a major threat from the government side, but the legitimacy of gender studies is constantly under attack in the press."

"What's happening with Hungary," Paternotte said, "is now the people with these ideas get the power to impose their ideas."

**From Hungary to the U.S. to Brazil**

The American Association of University Professors' committees on academic freedom and women in the academic profession issued a joint statement in November responding both to Hungary's move to ban gender studies and reports that the Trump administration had drafted policies that would rescind civil rights protections for transgender students and define sex according to "immutable biological traits identifiable by or before birth." The AAUP statement also references attempts in Brazil, Bulgaria and Poland "to refute the scholarly consensus that gender identity is variable and mutable."

"The AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure and the Committee on Women in the Academic Profession strongly condemn these efforts to restrict the legal meaning of gender to what are said to be its natural, immutable forms," the statement said. "Restrictions like those imposed in Hungary directly interfere with the academic freedom of researchers and teachers. Biologists, anthropologists, historians, and psychologists have repeatedly shown that definitions of sex and sexuality have varied over time and across cultures and political regimes. Some of their work suggests that state-enforced preservation of traditional gender roles is associated with authoritarian attempts to control social life and to promise security in troubled times by pledging to protect patriarchal family structures. Authoritarian efforts such as these can justify racial, class, and sexual policing that disciplines forms of kinship and homemaking -- including same-sex, multi-generational, or other nonnormative households -- that deviate from established nuclear family norms. Politicians and religious fundamentalists are neither scientists nor scholars. Their motives are ideological. It is they who are offering 'gender ideology' by attempting to override the insights of serious scholars. By substituting their ideology for years of assiduous research, they impose their will in the name of a 'science' that is without factual support. This is a cynical invocation of science for purely political ends."

Roman Kuhar, the dean of the Faculty of Arts and a sociology professor at the University of Ljubljana, in Slovenia, and co-editor with Paternotte of the book on gender campaigns across Europe, described the term "gender ideology" as an "empty signifier": "Because gender ideology is such an empty signifier, it can be filled in with different things," he said. "Sometimes it can be filled in with the issue of marriage, sometimes LGBT rights; sometimes it refers to sex education in schools, sometimes it refers to gender studies as such. Nowadays we have, I would say, a movement which is comprised of different actors, not all of them related to religious institutions or religion as such, but they see this 'gender theory' or 'gender ideology' as a common enemy that they fight against."

Premilla Nadasen, a professor of history at Barnard College and president of the National Women's Studies Association, said the term "gender ideology" has come to dominate how certain groups talk about gender. "I think what they suggest through this phrase 'gender ideology' that this is somehow contrary to family values," Nadasen said. "But women and gender studies scholars are not rooted in a 'gender ideology.' They think about gender as a frame of analysis for understanding the way in which the world works. I think if there's any ideology that has been manifest in this debate, it's the right-wing ideology that is attempting to return to a heteronormative patriarchal society."

Nadasen said there are different ways in which attacks on gender studies scholars manifest. "I think in some places the conversation often centers around abortion, and that has been the kind of launching pad for thinking about the crisis of quote, unquote gender ideology. In other places it's about reproductive rights. In other places it's about same-sex marriage. In other places it's about the breakdown of the two-parent heterosexual family, or even childcare … In all of these cases the culprit becomes women and gender studies scholars. They become the reason for the supposed breakdown in family values."

Nadasen described "a broader problem of intimidation and harassment, almost a kind of bullying" against gender studies scholars. "It hearkens back to the days of McCarthyism when individuals who attempted to speak out on particular issues were automatically identified as Communists, regardless of what their ideas were, regardless of whether they were actually Communist. We're seeing something similar today where someone who is a dissenting voice is taking a risk, [who] is attempting to speak out on a particular issue is automatically tainted and is blacklisted and is then a potential target for harassment by a broader audience. I think this is facilitated by the internet by lists that are posted online. I think it's very, very dangerous for academic freedom."

In Brazil, which recently elected a far-right candidate for president, Jair Bolsonaro, a bill pending in the National Congress would go so far as to bar the use of the term "gender" in teaching.

The bill purports to "respect the beliefs of students that come from their parents and other guardians, privileging family values in their school education related to moral, sexual and religious education," the executive committee of the Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA) said in a Nov. 15 statement about academic freedom in Brazil. "Our own analysis of the text of the bill, however, suggests that it could have devastating effects on teachers at all levels of education. Among other things, we are gravely concerned that educators will be bullied and dismissed as a form of persecution based on the way they approach issues in the classroom. There is already evidence that this is happening, with elected politicians encouraging students to denounce and slander educators through social networks, verbal aggression, and direct threats of violence."

"We are also concerned about the application and effects of laws like these on marginalized communities," the BRASA statement says. "If enacted, it could very well prohibit teaching topics related to gender in schools and universities, thus disregarding much of the human knowledge produced in the last decades in many disciplines, which consider gender relations as an essential aspect of human experience at all times and in all societies."

James N. Green, the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Professor of Modern Latin American History at Brown University and the executive director of the Brazilian Studies Association, said with the election of Bolsonaro and a more conservative Congress, there is a possibility the bill might get traction.

Marlene de Fáveri, a professor of history at Brazil's State University of Santa Caterina, said gender studies has been under "systematic pressure" in Brazil since the bill was first introduced in 2014. De Fáveri herself was sued for "ideological persecution" by a former student -- and a newly elected congresswoman from Bolsonaro's party -- who has called for filming or recording professors who make partisan or ideological statements in the classroom. The lawsuit was dismissed in September.

"The election of the right-wing and ultraconservative candidate drastically affects academic freedom and gender studies," de Fáveri said of the election of Bolsonaro. "His campaign was strongly based on speeches preaching the elimination of what he calls the 'gender ideology,' supported by conservative parties, especially the evangelical party. The proposed minister of education also agrees with his conservative ideology, which is rather alarming and will likely lead to eventual challenges when possible changes in educational laws come into force."

"What they call 'gender ideology' is a fallacy; the introduction of such concept into a bill is, in reality, meant to propagate hatred towards feminists, is a political tool aimed to minimize the scientific character of gender studies and discredit the field. It takes a great deal of effort to deny the world-renowned research efforts and the vast body of knowledge regarding women, gender as a category of social analysis and gendered violence, as well as the hard and numerous battles women had to fight throughout history to be legally recognized," she said.

**'A Spearhead of a Wider Attack'**

Gender studies scholars see attacks on gender studies as part of a broader attack on universities and independent scholarship.

"Every undemocratic government wants to control the knowledge production and sexuality, which explains why gender studies become the target in the first place," said Andrea Pető, a professor of gender studies at Central European University, which on Monday announced it had been forced out of Hungary and would be moving its main campus to Vienna. "Attacks on gender studies as a scientific discipline [have] become a central rhetorical tool of those efforts that try to determine for the wider audience what 'science' should mean, and thereby try to create a new consensus of what should be seen as normal, legitimate and scientific."

"I see gender studies as a spearhead of a wider attack on free academic inquiry," said Ov Cristian Norocel, a Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellow at the Free University of Brussels (ULB), where he is studying right-wing populist parties in Europe. "It seems that gender studies seems to be one of the first kind of subjects of critical knowledge that are attacked, particularly in this kind of environment in which there seems to be an agenda for dismantling knowledge in general. What happened in Hungary is you have these very aggressive attacks against CEU. CEU is chased out of the country. CEU is also

Is you have these very aggressive attacks against OLC. OLC is chased out of the country. OLC is also one of the few universities that actually had a gender studies program."

"Gender studies and gender equality and equality for LGBT people are threatening for authoritarian regimes because authoritarian regimes require for somebody to have more power than somebody else; once you overthrow the idea that the patriarchy is something natural, for them that is the destruction of a kind of building block of culture," said Kevin Moss, the Jean Thomson Fulton Professor of Modern Languages & Literature at Middlebury College.

Moss has written about the role of Russia's academic establishment in producing and promoting "anti-gender discourse." Closer to home, he said that the gender studies program at Middlebury came under attack from pundits who characterized its courses as being "categorically insane" after the disruption of a March 2017 talk by Charles Murray, a writer best known for his controversial work linking intelligence and race. Though the talk wasn't about gender studies, Moss said supporters of Murray looked to the gender studies department "to discredit Middlebury and particularly to discredit the side that was against Murray."

"I think every subject or field of research that has a critical view on society or that has some ideas about societal change will often be contested," said Linda Marie Rustad, the director and editor of a news magazine on gender research, *Kilden*, which is part of the Research Council of Norway and which recently published an article on right-wing attacks on gender studies.

"Gender science studies has developed from a critical tradition in the social sciences and humanities," Rustad said. "Hence it isn't necessarily bad or strange that gender science studies is being disputed. We have had the same debates in Norway on environmental studies not being scientific enough. And we also have in Europe now, also due to right-wing populism, a critique against research on migration. Looking at the right-wing populist winds, we see globally it is not accidental that gender studies is under attack. We need to understand that the attacks on gender are part of a bigger picture."

At the same time, Rustad cautioned against drawing too dark a picture. "It's very important to take this very seriously. But in Norway I'm not worried, and I think that would be the same for many countries."

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**Glenn M. Ricketts** • 4 months ago

Actually, gender studies, women studies, - whatever the disciplinary designation - has been justifiably criticized for some time by insiders with direct experience. Chief among the critics" objections has been the heavy emphasis placed on subjective personal experience, advocacy of contemporary political causes and narrow ideological intolerance. See for example this 1993 evaluation in Mother Jones by journalist Karen Lehrman:

https://www.motherjones.com...

Probably the bets and most detailed, however, is found in Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge's book Professing Feminism, 2nd edition:

https://www.amazon.com/Prof...

Patai and Koertge, who began as founders of Womens studies programs at their respective institutions, ended up fleeing as refugees, also the experience of the late Elizabeth Fox-Genovese at Emory. In both instances, a rigid party line quickly displaced legitimate research work, and partisan advocacy reigned supreme, as these works illustrate in extensive detail.

46 | Share ›

**King Goat** ➚ Glenn M. Ricketts • 4 months ago

"Chief among the critics" objections has been the heavy emphasis placed on subjective experience"

You say this as if it's clearly such a bad thing, and in a way that makes me think you don't understand how the reference and use to it often works. Take, for an example, the eugenics movement that was dominant in the US about a hundred years ago. A historian who focused on the 'scientific literature' and 'black letter case law' at the time in telling and understanding this story would be doing something, but someone who interviewed or looked at the diaries/letters of, say, the men and women condemned as feeble minded and forcibly sterilized against their will, focusing on their subjective experiences of whether they were 'defective,' whether they got 'due process' or not, etc., would, in my opinion would be doing *at least* as valuable research, if not moreso.

Then someone like you would come along. 'Hey, you're just focusing on one side of the controversy! You're taking sides, political advocacy [on this issue of ...forced sterilization?]! and you're intolerant of those that thought forced sterilization was really a good thing! What a terrible field that produced such work.!'

11 | Share ›

**AssociateProfessor** ➚ King Goat • 4 months ago

In few other disciplines beyond gender studies is autoethnography considered to be publishable peer-reviewed research.

It's not about the historian looking with the lens of history at the contemporaneous accounts of those that lived at the time. Autoethnography is writing about one's own experience: colored by bias, activist impulses and impenetrable meaningless jargon.

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**SK** • 4 months ago

This article is long but length is not the same as being comprehensive. This article fails to discuss why gender studies has fallen into disrepute. The whole field represents the views of a small but extremely vocal group of ideologues that cloak their results as science by using big words but fail to follow the basic scientific method of repeatability under control. Gender studies always denounces everything bad as a result of the “patriarchy” and thus condemning the male half the world as evil. There is zero attempt to objectively study the benefits of the patriarchy in gender studies but there are gazillions of “scientific” articles published by gender studies people extolling the virtues of women and women power.

There is zero balance in gender studies or this article.

57 | Share ›

**King Goat** ➚ SK • 4 months ago

The benefits of patriarchy (which is just the idea of socio-political forces that advantage men at the expense of women, is there any doubt this is a huge historically [at the least] accurate description for a lot of things)? Is that like the benefits of colonialism, or slavery or sexism or anti-Semitism?

Look, there's nothing non-academic about focusing on a single, overarching variable. Gender studies does so with patriarchy or gender norms, but other approaches do so with class (Marxism), rationality (economics), purpose(structural functionalism), etc., but they get much less invective aimed at them.

You display an astounding ignorance or uncharitable stance towards what you so vehemently denounce. Gender studies hardly generally 'condemn[s] the male half of the world as evil,' in fact they very often point out how gender norms often restrict and hinder males in many ways (are you a guy who happens to be into making jewelry? being a nurse? a homemaker? etc., well, get ready to catch a lot of heck, for no good reason)

to catch a lot of heck, for no good reason).

Every field has some silliness in it. But with gender studies ideological enemies with big soapboxes spend a great deal of time and effort in magnifying that and simplifying the field. It's a shame how many otherwise intelligent people can't get past that propaganda to take a charitable and honest view of what is a large, broad field and find that there are many things worthwhile there.

17 | Share ›

**sage** ➚ King Goat • 4 months ago

True, every field does have its unfortunates. But all too often those who have legitimately questions of findings in gender studies are called misogynists and told to shut up.

11 | Share ›

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**Harry Cleaver** ➚ SK • 4 months ago

Assertions, assertions, assertions - with not one whit of evidence. "Disrepute"? Among which group? Adherents of patriarchy? "Ideologues that cloak their results as science . . .but fail to follow the basic scientific method of repeatability under control"? Not only is no evidence cited, but the statement fails to recognize the difficulty, throughout the social sciences, of "control" when talking about human beings. Moreover, condemning patriarchy in no way condemns "the male half of the world as evil"; it mere condemns a social regime that privileges men over women, conferring more power on the former and less on the latter. "Benefits of the patriarchy"? Benefits to whom? One thing gender studies DO is demonstrate, again and again,is that the material, but superficial, benefits are to men, at the expense of women. But beyond that, they also show how men in general suffer the consequences of holding down and demeaning women - depriving them of the benefits of real equality, from healthy human relationships to access to the repressed talents of roughly half the population. What would "balance" look like in gender studies? The advantages as well as the disadvantages of various patriarchal practices? Which? Of rape? Of women as handmaidens? Of sexual trafficking - most of which involves women? Of the widespread practices of sexual harassment and more subtle actions to demean, most recently revealed by #metoo and its follow up?

11 | Share ›

**mark abrams** ➚ Harry Cleaver • 4 months ago

Tell us specifically what is gender studies investigating? Does the study have anything to do with sex or biology or is it a branch of psychology or sociology? How many papers published by gender studies academics get 1 or fewer citations? What inventions, therapies, or works of arts have arisen from gender studies? Isn't it the case that gender studies is primarily an attempt to alter language and society to transfer power to groups unable to get what they want using merit, intelligence and industry? Isnt gender studies dominated by Marxist concepts of oppression, alienation, marginalization and the evils of capitalism (merit). How does one distinguish gender-studies from intersectional identity politics Marxism?

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**Moral Lensatic Compass GG Jane** • 4 months ago

You managed to use 'right-wing' or 'alt-right' seven times but no mention of the left.

22 | Share ›

**SGT Ted** • 4 months ago

Gender studies has become a haven for intolerant ideologues who attack heterosexuals and white males as the reason for all the worlds problems. The response to well deserved criticism is yet more conspiracy laden language attacking and blaming patriarchy and capitalism, the chief go-to boogymen of leftists for decades. Gender studies intersexuality is intellectually vapid circular logic cloaked as science, all the while claiming oppression while sitting in positions of privilege.

37 | Share ›

**CalvinPi** ➚ SGT Ted • 4 months ago

You hit a major nail on the head when you brought up blaming capitalism.

Ever find find a gender studies ‘researcher’ who espouses free market capitalism? One who has even read, much less agrees with anything by Freidrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, or Adam Smith? I doubt it.

The reaction to gender studies may be ideological, but the bland assertions that gender studies and the people involved are not ideological is ludicrous to the point of not deserving polite responses.

As one professor proudly told me, his world view ‘is informed by Marx.’ Since when is Marxism not ideological?

9 | Share ›

**JerrY4** ➚ SGT Ted • 4 months ago

You certainly represent a large number of commenters at IHE. This makes me reflect on the recent case of Dr. Rankin at MSU. She left her tenure-track position after filing harassment charges against an administrator - a relationship with an inherent power imbalance. She later faced claims of misconduct. The majority of commenters attacked her work and shored up the idea of misconduct. Few to none discussed the harassment. Why? She works in gender studies. I

maintain that in today's society it is easier to attack something like Gender Studies than fields like Asian or Black Studies. That is worth investigating.

1 · Share ›

**Lauren Bertrand** ➚ JerrY4 • 4 months ago

The #MeToo movement has undeniably brought far greater scrutiny onto harassment accusations. In the end, it may actually have have hurt women more than men: increasing numbers of men have indicated an unwillingness to mentor, chaperone, hire or even work alongside women out of fear of an accusation and the ensuing lynchmob that jettisons due process. While the harassment accusations have targeted a few thousand men (maybe a few ten thousand), the diminished job prospects because of an ability for the sexes to work together could trickle down to all women. I personally resent this.

6 · Share ›

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**Brett Powers** • 4 months ago

Given the entire field is a gigantic intellectual void, populated only by progressive feel-good memes, this would seem to be a natural enough reaction, similar to why the study of phrenology failed in the 19th century.

30 · Share ›

**TJM** • 4 months ago

Obviously the questions addressed by gender studies, etc, belong in universities. The question is whether the researchers addressing them should be siloed off into topic-based departments, or should be spread over departments like history, sociology, philosophy, psychology, etc. My expectation is that higher levels of rigor in the research will result from the latter approach. The Sokal-squared hoax experiment provides some suggestive evidence that that's the case, although the project was too small in scope and too exploratory in methodology to provide very strong evidence that that's the case.

15 · Share ›

**goodsensecynic** ➚ TJM • 4 months ago

Absolutely!

Are we also interested in dismantling "Black Studies," "Labor Studies" and so on ... or can we look forward to the integration of "intersectionality" in an inclusive and expansive network of "social" studies?

NB: physics and chemistry have their specialties too.

1 · Share ›

**ChuckFinley** ➚ goodsensecynic • 4 months ago

Dismantling them? No. Defunding them, absolutely. It Is my fervent wish that state and federal funding will be ended for this ideological pseudoscience. Spend the money funding hard science or educating people to earn a productive living. Let eccentric billionaires pay for gender studies departments if that is what they want to do with their money.

3 · Share ›

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**CC CC** ➚ TJM • 4 months ago

"The question is whether the researchers addressing them should be siloed off into topic-based departments, or should be spread over departments like history, sociology, philosophy, psychology, etc." Agreed. And if one thinks that gender studies should not be siloed off, what other subfields shouldn't exist? Would we also say the same about Africana studies? Asian studies? How about Jewish studies? Are all "<insert identity="" here=""> studies" off limits?

Share ›

**TJM** ➚ CC CC • 4 months ago

My view is that all these departments represent important topics. And many of them are topics that were largely ignored by the appropriate academic departments for a long time, which is part, I think, of why the departments were created. History, literature, sociology, etc., departments at one time probably couldn't be trusted to hire people who studied women in history, and so women's studies departments were created to ensure that campuses had a place to support those activities. Now, if the scholars in the "studies" departments were integrated into the appropriate academic departments, would those departments then wait for them to retire and replace them with people who focused on cisgender white men? In most cases, I think probably not. Mileage may vary from campus to campus, but largely speaking, I think these fields will stay alive, and probably benefit from more academic rigor if they were put back into more disciplinary frameworks, but with some support for engaging with people in the other departments.

3 · Share ›

**Ankylus** • 4 months ago

The "studies" fields were illegitimate from their inception. What they are now complaining about is people pointing that out. The points of view they express may be legitimate within the context of other fields of study, but as separate fields of study they have become nothing more than political ideologies.

20 · Share ›

**leunep** ➚ Ankylus • 4 months ago

Which "studies" fields? Classical studies? Religious studies? Military studies?

1 · Share ›

**Ankylus** ↗ leunep • 4 months ago

Point taken. I spoke too broadly. Any "studies" field that views issues through a single prism...gender studies, women's studies, black studies, chicano studies, etc.

Share ›

**Ed** • 4 months ago

It's a useless discipline used to retain marginal students. The Hungarian officials are absolutely correct. I'd add race studies too. These disciplines should maintain an emphasis on history not cultural pop culture if they are to continue.

23 Share ›

**aisler** ↗ Ed • 4 months ago

Most gender studies work is done within traditional disciplines such as history, sociology, psychology, biology. My students who study gender tend to be the best studies in my field (psychology) because they are aware of cultural influences on human behavior.

BTW every field has some jerks, but what other field is completely dismissed because of those, who often do not represented the field as a whole? It only seems to happen with studies of marginalized groups. I'm sure that is a coincidence. Perhaps science can address that question--but apparently that study could not be objective if done by feminists.

4 Share ›

**Scott1M** ↗ aisler • 4 months ago

You are aware, perhaps, that the very idea of objective research is called into question by feminists? That the scientific method has been labeled as the colonization of knowledge by feminists?

9 Share ›

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This comment was deleted.

**Scott1M** ↗ Guest • 4 months ago

So is sanskrit. Does that mean a state-run university has to make available finite resources to those that wish to study it from freshman year through retirement, never once leaving academia?

2 Share ›

**pca2002** • 4 months ago

You would think that with such a long article, the author would at least address the initial charge: what labor demand is there for gender studies graduates? Near zero seems right to me; they can't ALL go into academia or professional protesting.
Gender studies should be like any other social science; many might take a course or two as an elective; but few, if any, major in it.

11 Share ›

**John Moore** ↗ pca2002 • 4 months ago

I suspect the labor demand is for bureaucrats to staff the various organizations the enforce intersectionality against the freedom of students at universities, and the public at large. If an organization wishes to withstand the onslaughts of gender activists, hiring a gender studies ideologue goes a long way.

Other than that, there is little rigor in the field. There are a few interesting questions, easily dealt with in related, existing and more rigorous fields - as already mentioned by another commenter.

10 Share ›

**Stephen W. Houghton** ↗ John Moore • 4 months ago

Yep, you got it in one. The administration of universities where they will crush free academic inquiry and government where they will crush freedom more broadly.

2 Share ›

**hyphenatedamerican** • 4 months ago

The article equates “gender studies” with knowledge.... In other words it pretends that a purported intention to generate knowledge will inherently result in new knowledge. That’s unscientific.
It also proclaims that “gender studies” produce freedom, justice and prosperity, but cites no empirical evidence.

The argument that “gender” is mutable is also unsupported, and the article cannot even define this term.

In short, this article written by supporters of “gender studies” and quotes if it’s proponents demonstrates why “gender studies” cannot be taken seriously.

8 Share ›

**Harry Cleaver** • 4 months ago

-"Looking at the right-wing populist winds, we see globally it is not accidental that gender studies is under attack. We need to understand that the attacks on gender are part of a bigger picture." Yes, absolutely. One immediate consequence might be to read the other article in this issue on the "Surge in Anti-Semitism". The backlash against gender studies, women's studies and all alternatives to the patriarchal domination of society must also be grasped as integral to an even broader reactionary CAPITALIST backlash against virtually every threat to the freedom to invest and exploit thrown up by struggle in the last 60 years or so - from gender studies through environmental, migration and labor policies. Capitalist ways of organizing (and despoiling) the world have been under attack for decades, in virtually every domain. So-called Populism, while often rooted in populations particularly hard hit by capitalist policies, is also being instrumentalized to divide and conquer opposition, critique and the development of

alternatives. As usual all excuses, both old (anti-Semitism) and new (anti-Gender fluidity) are useful for such efforts. Not all capitalists and their strategists embrace or promulgate these reactionary policies; some have adapted to the changes wrought by struggle and ride the wave of change. But others refuse, react viciously and must be fought - everywhere, in every domain. We are being, it seems, thrown back to the kind of choices we faced in the 1920s-30s: reactionary capitalism of the Nazis or Soviet State capitalism brands, or progressive capitalism of the Roosevelt-New Deal variety. For those who want to look further - for the possibilities of moving beyond capitalism in toto - it's obvious which of these choices are preferable.

9 ^ | v • Share ›

**Seanzorelli** ➚ Harry Cleaver • 4 months ago

"reactionary capitalism of the Nazis"
Didn't take long for reductio-ad-Hilterum to be deployed, did it?

12 ^ | v • Share ›

**Harry Cleaver** ➚ Seanzorelli • 4 months ago

Snark has become - these days - the most blatant method of avoiding the work of actually crafting substantive responses to arguments one doesn't like.

^ | v • Share ›

**Lauren Bertrand** ➚ Harry Cleaver • 4 months ago

It's amazing how, the more "-isms" a particular treatise includes, the less room there is for any individual volition within a given narrative. But that is clearly the goal.

5 ^ | v • Share ›

**Harry Cleaver** ➚ Lauren Bertrand • 4 months ago

The demand for the analysis of "individual volition" would seem an appropriate demand for an analysis of an individual's behavior and choices, including their role in history. So what are you objecting to? My not analyzing Hitler, or Stalin or Roosevelt's decision making? Others have done that, and comparisons and contrasts with how contemporary "leaders" (like Trump or Putin or Duarte or MBS) make decisions can be useful, but that wasn't my goal.

^ | v • Share ›

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**polistra24** • 4 months ago

How can you "delegitimize" a field that is totally illegitimate and anti-scientific? It's like criminalizing Al Capone.

3 ^ | v • Share ›

**nastycanasta** • 4 months ago

Why should a state with limited resources fund a program at a state university for relatively few students who then have little to no effect on that state's economy? You could say the same about other subjects, like philosophy, but those are disciplines, not "studies." Why aren't courses focused on "gender" just part of other departments, like literature, art, sociology, or anthropology? The answer is that they need their own faculty lines in departments in order to survive and grow. Feminists do not reproduce in sufficient numbers, so they have to rely on perpetuating their ideology by institutionalizing it. Departments allow them to do this.

4 ^ | v • Share ›

**leunep** • 4 months ago

The best thing about these comments is that dozens of people are complaining about gender studies while engaging in gender studies themselves.

1 ^ | v • Share ›

**tapirape** • 4 months ago

If the entire field of gender studies - and not just its excesses and weaknesses - is to be targeted, what might be next? Economics and political science departments?

2 ^ | v • Share ›

**hyphenatedamerican** ➚ tapirape • 4 months ago

Next ones are astrology and alchemistry.

9 ^ | v • Share ›

**alsotps** ➚ tapirape • 4 months ago

Already are under attack as social sciences. So are the Humanities disciplines. The attacks are also world-wide.

2 ^ | v • Share ›

**Tony Davis** ➚ alsotps • 4 months ago

I take issue with the premise that these fields are somehow unfairly under "attack."

We comport ourselves and our disciplines as sciences, so why is it wrong to expect the research generated by said fields conform to the rigors of that designation? Me-search and the many strains of ideological activism posing as science too often fail the standards of objective and reproducible work and should be condemned accordingly. The failure of academic practitioners to demand scholarly excellence from themselves and their colleagues invites the very "attacks" they so loudly decry.

It seems to me the owning up to our own failures and shortcomings is more productive than complaining that others have noticed them as well.

20 ^ | v • Share ›

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**Ribb Rotgut** • 4 months ago

These attacks on Gender studies, (as well as Queer studies, Critical Race Theory, Latinx studies, Indigenous/Decolonization studies etc) are perpetuated by the privileged to uphold their situatedness in the systemic structures of what bell hooks wisely described as the "imperialist capitalist white supremacist cisheteronormative patriarchy".

2 • Share ›

**HistoryProf** ➚ Ribb Rotgut • 4 months ago

Can't tell if this comment is satire or not. If satire, well done. If not satire, this gobbledygook is why these fields are under fire.

39 • Share ›

**King Goat** ➚ HistoryProf • 4 months ago

Every academic field has, to the 'uninitiated,' strange and odd sounding jargon about ideas/concepts that not everyone is familiar with and are, to those outside the field, really odd seeming at first. Traditional religious studies tosses around 'eschatological,' 'premillennialism,' 'antinomianism,' etc., without getting a shred of the same attacks for being 'gobbledygook' which could be said to be about nonsense.

The difference is that gender studies seems to threaten a lot of dudes it seems...

14 • Share ›

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**John Moore** ➚ Ribb Rotgut • 4 months ago

"situatedness" could only be written by someone drunk with the liquor of intersictionality foolishness.

These attacks are mostly against the efforts of people in these "fields" to cook up theories that match their Marxist-derived ideology ("privileged" for example). That they then use those theories to codify rules which reduce the freedom of students, and of people in society in general, is why they are attacked.

2 • Share ›

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**Mostlynew** • 4 months ago

Feelings in search of justification makes poor science.

• Share ›

**Proud Skeptic** • 4 months ago

This article is based on the underlying assumption that gender studies is of great value and worthy of the kinds of funding it is currently receiving (or more, I assume). In that context, the author makes some good points. However, it is completely appropriate in an honest academic setting to take an argument like this down to its core principles and assumptions. Therefore, I offer that is it appropriate to question the basic underlying assumption here as well.

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graddirector — Well, you are welcome to your opinion as well. I just hope you would feel the same way about that laptop cover showing a …

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